THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

Published monthly by the State Normal School for Woman at Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Entered as second-class matter March 13, 1920, at the post office at Harrisonburg, Virginia, under the act of March 3, 1879.

James C. Johnston, Editor
Conrad T. Logan, Assistant Editor
Henry A. Converse, Manager

IX

CURRENT EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION

PROBLEMS OF VISUAL EDUCATION

In place of diatribes against the "movies" and movements to arouse parents against them because of dangerous influences they may exert on children, progressive educators and educational magazines generally are rather recognizing that so tremendous a factor in modern life as the "movie" can not be suppressed. Rather are they attempting to organize the feeling that visual education is here to stay; and that the best way to counteract the influence of bad "movies" is to make possible the wholesale production and presentation of good "movies."

COMENIUS AND VISUAL EDUCATION

Something of the fundamental soundness of this program of visual education is voiced by Dean William F. Russell, of the University of Iowa, who declares that Comenius, the Moravian educator who is honored as the founder of our present school system and the "father of picture-books," would have accepted visual education with open arms, heart and mind.

"Comenius was constantly preaching the doctrine of teaching through the eye. He believed heart and soul in the teaching power of pictures. He published the first illustrated textbook, and thereby won the love and gratitude of boys and girls the world over, from his age to this. How this 17th century pioneer in modern educational methods would have delighted in our present opportunity to instruct through pictures that represent life as it really is, life in motion!

"It is easy to imagine the joy that must be his today as his spirit hovers lovingly, and perhaps a bit wistfully, over American schoolrooms where eager children are watching pictures moving on a screen as part of their regular lessons. One of his favorite diatribes against the schools of his day was that they were 'slaughter-houses of the mind' and 'places where minds are fed on words.' He had no patience with the kind of learning that merely memorized lessons without understanding them."

CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION

In a recent issue *The National .School Digest* says: No one seriously questions that the motion picture has come to stay and that it will probably play a big part in the school education of the future. That it is playing a big part in the education of the youth of today outside the schools is obvious. The actual benefit of this present education seems open to serious question, however, when "High School Students Petition for Bar Against Bad Pictures," as the headlines in a Minnesota paper read recently. The remedy seems to be to replace the bad with good, and to support those who are trying to do this. There is no use forbidding the child to go to the movies. It is as much of an injustice to do so as if he were forbidden ever to ride in an automobile. The thing to do is to make sure that there are the right kind of movies for him to go to, and that they are not interspersed with the wrong kind of vaudeville or extra films.

WHAT EDISON THINKS

Several years ago Thomas A. Edison was interviewed by the editor of the *Educational Film Magazine.* "What should be taught in the school and college films?" he was asked.

"Anything which can be taught to the ear can be taught better to the eye," flashed back Mr. Edison with his well known penchant for aphorisms. "I know of nothing, absolutely nothing, which the film is not capable of imparting to eyes old and young, from eight to eighty. It is said 'the eye is the

shortest distance to the brain,' and that is true. The moving object on the screen, the closest possible approximation to reality, is almost the same as bringing that object itself before the child or taking the child to that object."

A few years ago I had read a statement attributed to Edison that "movies would take the place of textbooks" and I asked him if he still believed it.

"Yes," he replied, without hesitation. "Film teaching will be done without any books whatsoever. The only textbooks needed will be for the teacher's own use. The films will serve as guide-posts to these teacher instruction books, not the books as guides to the films. The pupils will learn everything there is to learn, in every grade from the lowest to the highest. The long years now spent in cramming indigestible knowledge down unwilling young throats and in examining young minds on subjects which they can never learn under the present system, will be cut down marvelously, waste will be eliminated, and the youth of every land will at last become actually educated.

. . . "The trouble now is that school is too dull; it holds no interest for the average boy or girl. It was so in my schooldays and it has changed but little. But make every classroom and every assembly hall a movie show, a show where the child learns every moment while his eyes are glued to the screen, and you'll have one hundred per cent attendance. Why, you won't be able to keep boys and girls away from school then. They'll get there ahead of time and scramble for good seats, and they'll stay late begging to see some of the films over again. I'd like to be a boy again when film teaching becomes universal.

"Films, of course should be elaborate explanations of textbooks as they exist today. In many respects they will go far beyond the scope of the printed page; they will be able to make many things alive and real which now are dead and meaningless to the child. Today the teacher explains on the blackboard. In the school of tomorrow all explanations will be made on the motion picture screen. Many colleges and high schools will make their own films, as a few do now. Pictures are inevitable as practically the sole teaching method, because words do not interest young minds. It is only the few who can concentrate on abstract things, and it must always be remembered that education is for the many, not for the few. Films will teach one thousand times better and more quickly than the present system. . . . The most technical, the most complex themes, theories and concepts can be taught understandingly on the motion picture screen."

GETTING APPLAUSE FOR GEORGE

At a recent test of school children and the movies a slide of "The Last Supper" was shown and none of the children recognized it, according to the *National School Digest*. and slides of famous Americans followed with about the same results. But when pictures of Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin were shown the applause was loud and long. Movie education of some sort would seem to be desirable. If Mary Pickford's smiles can win a burst of applause there certainly should be a warm welcome also for the Hero of Valley Forge. The movies educated in the one case. Is it unreasonable to suppose that they might do as well in the other?

WATCHING INSTEAD OF DOING

But the *New York Times* points to an entirely different aspect of the case against the "movies." In a recent editorial it said:

"It is sometimes asserted—with far more plausibility than truth, probably—that this or that crime was committed in emulation or imitation of a vicious achievement shown on the screen. What is not asserted, but should be, is that more than often—somewhere near to usually —the influence exerted is the reverse of this and even more deplorable, especially on boys. These, if normal, all have a thirst for adventure—for getting out in the world and doing and seeing things for themselves. This most commendable 'urge', upon the natural and actual cultivation and satisfaction of which the welfare of the world and its inhabitants very largely depends, the movies divert and distort into complete sterility. The boy that spends much of his leisure time in the movie theatres contents himself with the adventures he sees on the screen, instead of finding adventures for himself and taking part in them as he should. He watches the game instead of playing it. This is depravity of a most terrible kind, and not one of the professional moralists has said a word about it."

SMALL TOWN OPPORTUNITY

In the small town it would seem that the problem of regulating the quality of "movies" can be more easily met, for here perhaps the school still has the field entirely

to itself. Edwin F. Abets, superintendent of the Rural High School, De Soto, Kansas, writes to the *Education Film Magazine*:

"You might be interested in knowing that out here in Kansas in a little town of 300 we have solved the motion picture question by using the school auditorium and placing the picture show business entirely in the control of the school. We plan to charge only enough to pay running expenses on the general run of films. The profits are used to pay for the equipment and to add to our library. It is a great success and is the solution for the picture industry in the small town."

FIRST STEPS IN VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The following statement of First Steps in Vocational Guidance was adopted by the National Vocational Guidance Association at its Atlantic City meeting:

The home and school programs should include a combination of play, handwork, co-operative activity, and academic work, the whole being varied enough to represent life's demands, and concrete enough to secure an effective and successful accomplishment by each individual child.

On the basis of individual differences revealed in the social life of the child, progress in school subjects, and in standardized tests, children should be classified into schoolroom groups. All group classifications should be regarded as tentative, being largely for the purpose of efficient learning and teaching.

For all children before the school-leaving age there should be provided a wide variety of try-out experiences in academic and aesthetic work, gardening, simple processes with tools and machines, elementary commercial experiences, and co-operative pupil activities. Such try-out experiences are for the purpose of teaching efficiency in every day tasks, broadening the social and occupational outlook of the children, and discovering to them and the teachers their interests and abilities.

Teachers of all subjects in schools and colleges should make a definite effort to show the relationships of their work to occupational problems just as they now relate them to other phases of life activity, such as the cultural, recreational, ethical, civic, and social.

Drifting through school is a common evil in all educational systems. The life-career motive, whether temporary or permanent, should be encouraged as one of the motives in the choice of a curriculum and of certain elective subjects within a curriculum.

The miscellaneous working experiences of children before and after school, on Saturdays, and in vacations should be studied and supervised. These experiences should be made to aid the child in understanding his environment and in discovering his vocational aptitudes and interests.

All forms of part-time education, such as the continuation school, co-operative courses, trade extension and trade preparatory courses, etc., should be provided in order that school and work may be brought into closer co-operation and that they may be more careful supervision of the child in employment.

EDUCATORS VS. IRRITATERS

There are two kinds of school administrators, those who want certain results and adopt certain methods in order to get them, and those who, never looking at results, keep up a chitter-chatter of worry about methods and the mechanics of the classroom. The first type of administrator educates; the second irritates.—*National School Digest.*

ARGUMENTS FOR TEACHERS COLLEGES IN MINNESOTA

In urging the passage of a bill that would provide for a change of name from "State Normal School" to "Teachers College" for regular teacher-training institutions in the State of Minnesota, sponsors of the change brought forward the following reasons:

1. The name "college" properly describes an institution that receives students who have finished the high school.

2. The name "Teachers College" has a definite meaning for everyone. The word "normal" is a foreign word, not always understood, whose meaining is becoming obsolete.

3. The change will enhance the standing of the work and thus attract stronger candidates to the teaching profession.

4. The name "college" will appeal to high school graduates and will help recruit larger numbers of teachers.

5. The word "college" will prevent confusion with "normal training departments"

maintained in one hundred Minnesota high schools.

6. "Teachers College" is distinct from "College of Education" at the University, and from the names of private colleges within the state.

7. Twenty-five states have already made the change and use the name "State Teachers College" for their teacher training institutions of college grade.

X

PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

As a means of organizing systematically one's view of the educative process and its objectives and as a basis for judging and evaluating current ideas and practices, no subject in the field of educational studies is more important for the teacher than that of the principles or philosophy of education. However, it has been and still remains unfortunately a rather intangible field, because philosophers today as yesterday build their own systems of thought and an appropriate language and terminology for that thought. Today one no longer turns with satisfaction to the older philosophies of Rosenkranz, Kantor Herbert Spencer, because the researches of the educational historians and the modern educational scientists have changed the value of their work. There is therefore appearing a new crop of writers and writings in this field.

Coursault's *The Principles of Education* is divided into three fairly equal parts, entitled the Individual Process, the Social Process, and the Educational Process. In the first two the argument very briefly is as follows: the factors of the individual process or individual development are purposes and means of control, the patterns for which are found in the social process—for the former in history and the fine arts, for the latter in the sciences. These sections of the book are technical and relatively meager in direct implications for education. The third part deals with the aims, methods and curriculum of the school and is thoroughly readable and valuable for any teacher. The splendid binding of the book is no less appealing than the effective helps with each chapter, consisting of (1) brief introductory summaries of contents, (2) concluding reference lists and (3) sets of suggestive practical problems.

In Turner's *Essentials of Good Teaching*, one expects to find a practical consideration of the methods of instruction and management, but finds a treatise which in point of view is midway between such a handbook and a philosophy of education. It, like Coursault's *Principles of Education*, gives the reviewer the feeling that here is an effective book in the hands of the author but one with a system so highly individualized that in text form it does not get over to the general reader easily. The author harks back to the McMurrys and the older psychology of James and Angell, using the newer educational psychology with relative ineffectiveness and making little place for the project method. Perhaps the best features of the book are the chapters on The Means of Generating Responsibility, The Value and Method of Comparison, and two chapters summarizing subjective and objective standards for the measurement of teaching results. The binding is good and a satisfactory index is added, although no teacher's or students' helps are given.

Dr. Kilpatrick's *Syllabus* was written expressly for students in graduate courses in the philosophy of education in Teachers College. It too is the outgrowth of years of experience in the field and is printed in limited editions so that frequent revisions may be made. It draws heavily upon the newer educational psychology of Thorndike and the newer educational philosophy of Dewey. The thirty topics include many of a rather abstract nature, but others such as Democracy and Education, The State and Education, Educational Aims, and Moral Education. There is a splendid selected list of books for references making a four-page bibliography. There are also chapter bibliographies and there is a list of 165 suitable topics for indi

---

The Principles of Education, by Jesse H. Coursault. New York: Silver, Burdett and Co. 1921. 468 pages.

The Essentials of Good Teaching, by E. A. Turner. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co. 1920. 269 pages.

Syllabus in the Philosophy of Education, by William H. Kilpatrick. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University. 1921. 74 pages. (75 cents).